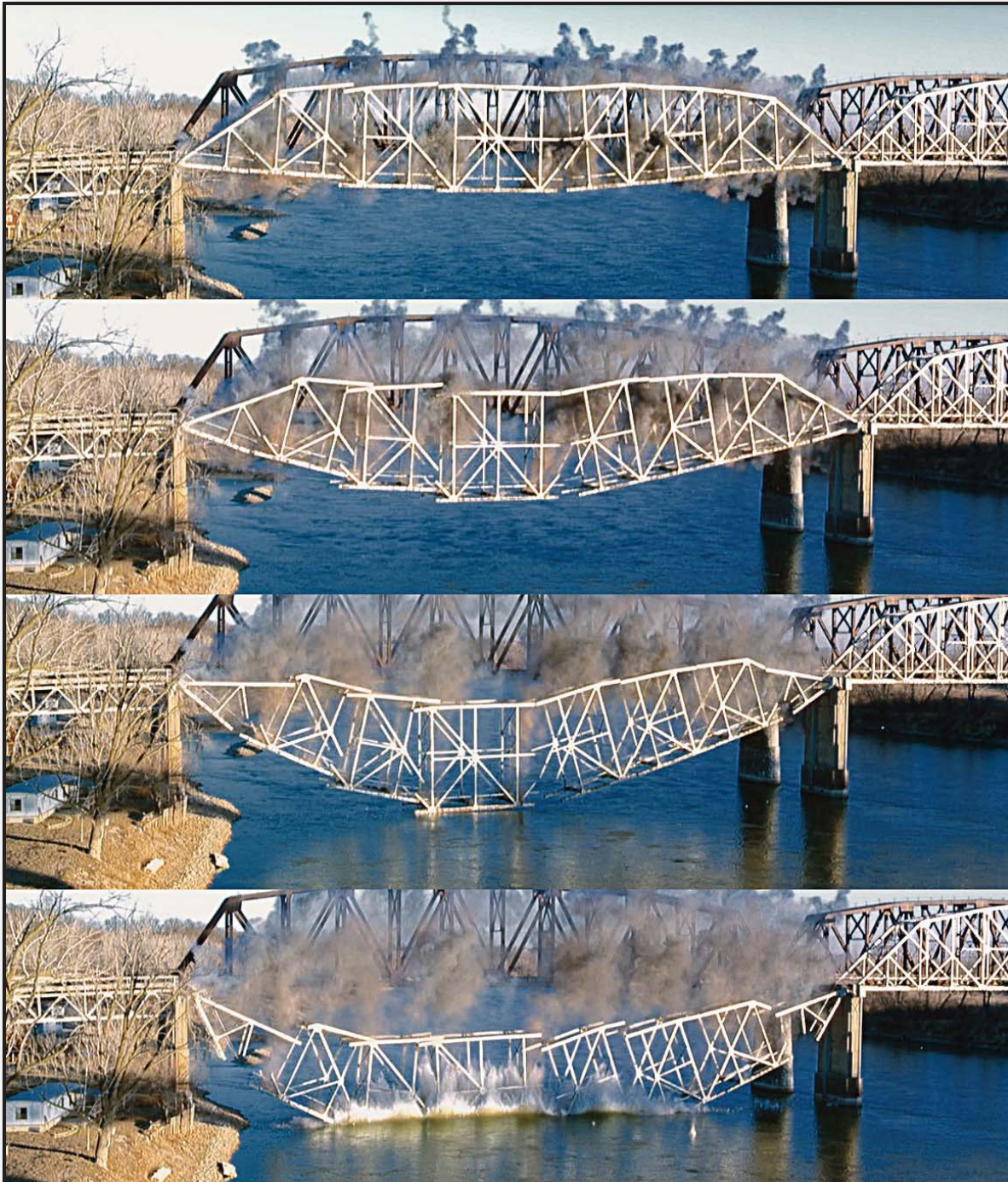


the ROADRUNNER

Nebraska ♦ Department ♦ of ♦ Roads

February/March 2014



Rulo Bridge is History (see page 2)

Photo by Clint Mangen

Governor Dave Heineman

Highway Commission

Rodney Vandeberg	Doug Leafgreen
E.J. Militti, Jr.	Ronald Books
David Copple	Greg Wolford
James Kindig	Jerome Fagerland

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Deputy DirectorMoe Jamshidi
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OperationsTom Sands
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Rail & Public TransportationRyan Huff
Right-of-WayRobert Frickel
Roadway DesignJames Knott
Traffic EngineeringDan Waddle

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District 2Timothy W. Weander
District 3Kevin Domogalla
District 4Wesley Wahlgren
District 5Craig Lind
District 6Gary Thayer
District 7Kurt Vosburg
District 8Mark Kovar

EditorLinda M. Wilson
Design & LayoutDiane German

The information in this newsletter is contributed
by employees, retirees and friends of NDOR.

Director's Appreciation Award to Lois Schmidt

NDOR Director-State Engineer Randy Peters presented the 2013 Director's Appreciation Award to Lois Schmidt, Human Resources Manager II, recognizing her contributions to the department. According to Director Peters, "Lois's efforts and leadership were key to the success of several critical projects. Her commitment to excellence is recognized and appreciated."

Lois is the first recipient of the Director's Appreciation Award, which was created last year to recognize and celebrate any employee, or group of employees, whose significant accomplishments or contributions reflect favorably upon the Nebraska Department of Roads, the State of Nebraska or their respective community, and which advance the mission, vision and values of the department.

Nominations for the award may be made by any NDOR employee and submitted informally by forwarding a note or email to their Deputy Director with an explanation of why the nomination is being made. The Director and Deputies review all nominations, and awards are given at their discretion. All employees are encouraged to nominate other employees regardless of their status or relationship, if they know of a person who is truly deserving of recognition for the role they fill or services they perform within NDOR. ♦



Photo by Jay Bailey

Lois Schmidt accepts the 2013 Director's Appreciation Award from NDOR Director Randy Peters.

On the cover...

The first span of the historic Rulo Bridge was imploded and temporarily plunged into the icy waters of the Missouri River on January 18. The two remaining spans followed in February, according to NDOR District 1 Project Manager, Mike Habegger, who was in charge of the bridge removal. Built by the Kansas City Bridge Company for \$760,000 in 1938, the bridge – with its arching metal trusses – was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1993. A new \$32 million bridge, built 670 feet south of the old bridge, was dedicated on Labor Day last year.

To view the video go to: <https://vimeo.com/84855848>

Ryan Huff Named New Rail & Public Transportation Engineer

Ryan Huff is the new Rail & Public Transportation Engineer for the Nebraska Department of Roads. Huff, a licensed professional engineer, succeeds Ellis Tompkins, who retired in December after serving more than 43 years at NDOR, including 17 years in this position.



Ryan Huff

Born and raised in Lincoln, Huff graduated from Lincoln High School in May 1996, and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering from UNL in May 2001. He also earned a Master's of Science in Civil Engineering from UNL in December 2002. Upon graduation, he worked for seven years at HWS/Benesch, a consulting company in Omaha. In 2009, he left the private sector to work full time for the Roads Department as the Traffic Analysis Section Head in Traffic Engineering Division, a post he held for the past 4½ years.

Huff said the part of his career he enjoys most is the development of personal relationships. "Having worked in the private sector and now in the public sector, I have had the opportunity to cultivate relationships with numerous individuals with varying backgrounds and experiences. Each person has been able to teach me in some way."

In discussing goals he would like to achieve in his new position, Huff said, "After acclimating myself to the duties and responsibilities, I would like to find ways to incorporate the new mission statement and strategic goals into the division's existing practices and processes. In addition, I plan to do what every employee strives to do, which is look for ways to improve upon the division's products and services."

Regarding his management approach, Huff noted, "One of the

things I emphasize is customer service. Every person is a potential customer. As a result, I try to treat everyone with professionalism and respect. This is rooted in the thought that we all work together to achieve a common mission and goals."

"I also look for ways to add value to myself and to the people around me. Adding value could mean adding new skills through training or adding services to your area of responsibility. I encourage those around me to actively pursue training and step outside their comfort zone to add new skills."

Huff noted that he is very grateful to serve the department in this new way and looks forward to working with the new team, adding, "I am also thankful for the leadership of Ellis Tompkins, who has cultivated a division of talented and resourceful people. The team he leaves behind is a testament to his lasting contributions to the department."

Ryan and his wife, Julie, have been married for three years and they have two boxer dogs, Charlie and Penny. Ryan's parents and identical twin brother still live in Lincoln, and his two sisters live in Omaha. In his spare time, he likes to cook, play with his dogs and exercise. Last spring, he completed his first half-marathon.

Tompkins Retires

After graduating from Iowa State University in 1970 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering, Ellis Tompkins came to work for

NDOR. He worked for two years at District 1, then eight years in Project Development working on corridor studies such as Kennedy Freeway, North Freeway and Lincoln bypasses. For the next 10 years he was the Railroad Liaison Engineer in Local Liaison, and then returned to Project Development for seven years as Agreements Engineer. From 1997 until his retirement in December 2013, he was the Rail & Public Transportation Engineer.

Tompkins said he has really enjoyed his career at NDOR for the past 43+ years, offering this advice, "I would tell anyone to work hard but don't get so wrapped up in work that you forget to laugh each day about something."

While he has no specific plans at this time, Tompkins said he will keep busy working on his acreage. His main hobbies are taking care of his four dogs, golfing, fishing and riding his Harley motorcycle. He also plans to visit his older brother and family in Cedar Falls, Iowa, and his son Kelly in Phoenix, Arizona, where he may move someday. ♦

Ice and snow . . .
take it slow



Wetlands Benefitting Wildlife – You Can Take That to the Bank!

By Melissa Marinovich
Planning & Project Development

When I ask people if they have ever visited a wetland, the answer is the same: “I got my boat stuck in a shallow spot full of cattails once.”

To the average city dweller, a wetland is nothing more than a lake full of cattails or a puddle with some frogs. But to those who come to know them, wetlands provide vital habitat for wildlife, control erosion, reduce flooding, filter sediments and pollution from moving into lakes and rivers, and are important to outdoor recreation. Wetlands, whether they are constantly, seasonally, or temporarily wet, are areas where animals and plants suited to wet environments flourish. Progress and development often come into conflict with these important landscape features. Under regulations of the Clean Water Act, mitigation of unavoidable impacts to wetlands often is a condition of a development permit.

Ecologically Valuable

Wetland mitigation is replacing impacted wetland functions through the creation or restoration of wetlands. The concept of wetland mitigation banking has been around since the 1970s and creates an economic incentive for restoring, creating, enhancing and/or preserving wetlands. Typically, mitigation banks are used to consolidate many small wetland mitigation projects into a larger and more ecologically valuable site. The consolidation encourages greater diversity of habitat and wetland function, while creating a more sustainable system.

In several states, private companies and groups have developed wetland bank sites and will allow developers and contractors to purchase credits from the bank to compensate for impacts elsewhere. In Nebraska, biologists at the Nebraska Depart-



Photo by Steve Duecker

Highway Environmental Biologist Melissa Marinovich checks the hydrology of an NDOR wetland mitigation site near Oconto, Nebraska.

ment of Roads (NDOR) saw an opportunity to develop these ecologically valuable bank sites rather than continue creating little potholes in the ditches to mitigate for impacts to wetlands from road projects. In 1999, the department received certification for the first wetland bank in Nebraska. The first site consisted of 11.4 acres south of Interstate 80 between Gothenburg and Cozad.

The Roads Department has developed an extensive wetland banking program to mitigate unavoidable roadway effects on wetlands. It not only provides the compensation for such effects, but also provides large-scale improvements to the ecological landscape and excellent habitat for several species throughout the state, often turning an overgrazed pasture or agricultural field into a thriving wetland teeming with wildlife. Currently, the department owns 19 sites totaling approximately 3,000 acres as part of the state's largest wetland banking program.

The department biologists monitor the development of the bank sites and use a variety of methods to manage vegetation enhancement, including goat grazing and prescribed burns. These sites have been used to educate the public about the importance of wetland conservation, as well as providing a field trip experience that many Lincoln Public School children will never forget.

Provide Habitat

Annual monitoring of the sites includes looking at hydrology, hydric soil development, plant diversity, wildlife diversity and use. Many of the wetland mitigation bank sites provide important habitat for threatened or endangered species, such as the American burying beetle and North American river otter.

A variety of bird species, such as avocets, curlew, plovers and sandpipers, use the bank sites. Ducks and geese often are foraging in the wet sites, and pheasants can

(see Wetlands on next page)

Wetlands *(cont'd. from page 4)*

be found inhabiting the upland native grass buffers surrounding the wetter areas. Pairs of native trumpeter swans continue to use an NDOR wetland site in the Sandhills for nesting and raising young. On a spring or summer day, you can find turtles, frogs, snakes and toads moving around the sites. I am always amazed at the amount and diversity of wildlife I will encounter in one day at a wetland bank.

NDOR has made a commitment to continue promoting and developing this program as an important ecological tool that benefits the environment and the wildlife of Nebraska. For more information on NDOR's wetland banking program, visit www.transportation.nebraska.gov/environment.

This article was reprinted with permission of the Lincoln Journal Star.



Photo by Melissa Marinovich
A family of trumpeter swans enjoys an NDOR wetland mitigation site south of Merriman, Nebraska.

SPOTLIGHT

State Property Damage Unit Emphasizes Safety, Savings

There are many scenarios that require involvement by NDOR's State Property Damage (SPD) Unit, as they work to recoup money from damaged state property, resulting in savings for taxpayers and continued safety for the traveling public.

According to Dan Waddle, NDOR Traffic Engineer, "The work we do ties directly to NDOR's streamlined mission statement which is: 'We provide the best possible statewide transportation system for the movement of people and goods.' It also relates directly and indirectly to all eight of NDOR's strategic goals, particularly safety; fiscal responsibility; asset management; mobility; communication, coordination, collaboration and cooperation."

Donna Hosick, State Property Damage Coordinator, works closely with personnel in the eight highway districts as she begins the process necessary to recover costs of

damaged Department of Roads' property. Typically signs and guard rails are involved, but sometimes other property is affected, such as light poles, bridges and state vehicles. The savings to the state are significant, with an average of \$1 million recovered every year. The largest amount recovered was \$145,000, after a semi-tractor trailer carrying a transformer hit the Military Avenue Bridge spanning I-680 in Omaha. In this case, the money was received from a company, rather than an individual.

Here is Hosick's description of the process in a nutshell: "Either the district or I learn of damage that's been done to state property. We communicate with each other about the damage. The district does the repairs and notifies me through the District Incident Reporting Knowledge base (DIRK) system. Once the work is completed and all the costs are in, I send an invoice to



Photo by Jay Bailey
Donna Hosick, State Property Damage Coordinator, works to recover costs of damaged NDOR property.

the responsible party and deal with insurance companies after 30 days. After another 30 days with no response, it goes to Legal and they try to collect the money for the state."

(see Property on next page)

Property *(cont'd. from page 5)*

According to Hosick, the DIRK system was started more than six years ago in District 5, located in Nebraska's Panhandle, for use in reporting incidents, such as a deer on the highway or a traffic signal that's not working. In addition to this and other uses, it has been implemented by all eight highway districts as a reporting system for state property damage. Hosick uses the system to communicate back and forth with the districts. All costs involved are taken from the DIRK system and placed in the Roads Billing System (RBS) which is managed by Controller Division.

Communication Critical

A key part of Hosick's work involves communicating with the various entities involved in the process, including the districts, drivers, insurance companies, Controller and Legal. She also works with Janie Vrtiska, NDOR's Fleet Manager, to make sure she has information on damaged vehicles and equipment for her records.

In addition to working closely with the districts in gathering information about state property damage through the DIRK system, every six months Hosick goes to one of NDOR's classrooms on "the Hill" in Lincoln and instructs new supervisors and superintendents on the basics of how to use the SPD DIRK system. She includes what to look for, required information, timelines and answers any questions. The main thing she impresses upon everyone is the importance of tracking and reporting information in a timely manner.

Hosick noted that she sometimes receives phone calls from individuals who don't understand why they are being charged for the damaged property when they feel someone else was at fault or the state will replace it anyway.

Other challenges Hosick encounters are dealing with insurance companies, primarily their policies on depreciating property, and trying to initiate contact on the phone with a person instead of a recording. "I don't deal

with them a lot, though, usually just notifying them; once I get the general process started, the legal process takes over."

Besides damage done to state property, on the other side of the coin, Hosick also deals with calls about damage done to vehicles while working on the roads, including windshield damage, or paint damage on a vehicle. "I give them the tort claim forms, then everything gets turned over to the State Claims Board and they handle it, since this is a liability issue. Because of this, we never really find out which claims were paid or the amount paid, but I do know how many requests we've gotten each year. While it fluctuates a bit, the number has gone down over the years. Last year I sent 198 instructional forms, compared with 278 sent in 2010."

New Program

Regarding changes anticipated in the future, Hosick emphasized that she would like to achieve her goal of getting all records (prior to use of the DIRK system) on to the computer. "While much of it is already on the computer, the records are currently stored in different places, and eventually I would like to have everything stored in one place, with the use of OnBase or a similar program that both stores information and notifies people

in the districts regarding tasks that are completed. The current system, Falcon, can only store the information; the program doesn't allow you to notify people."

Hosick's supervisor, Highway Safety Manager Bob Grant noted, "In addition to acquiring a system such as OnBase, we are looking at changes down the road that Controller will be making to the Roads Billing System. Since the information from our DIRK system is put into RBS, it will be important to make sure any changes we implement are in sync with their new system."

While challenging at times, Hosick takes pride in the part she plays in providing an efficient system for recouping money for the state and in knowing the work accomplished by the State Property Damage Unit relates directly to NDOR's mission and goals, particularly safety and fiscal responsibility.

Traffic Engineer Dan Waddle sums it up well: "It is of paramount importance to maintain the features of our state roadways and if property is damaged, to put the safety features back into place in a timely manner. It is a responsibility that we take very seriously."♦



Damaged guardrail, above, and a downed power pole, left, are typical of state property costs recovered by NDOR's State Property Damage Unit.

Tumbling Tumbleweeds...



A District 6 snowplow operator collected tumbleweeds January 22 on N-61, near Ogallala, along the south end of the dam on Lake McConaughy. According to Hwy. Maintenance Superintendent Bob Hilton, winds were around 40 mph and it took about 1.5 hours to get the roadway cleared for traffic.

Photo courtesy of the Keith County News

NDOR'S Third Annual Winter Party Entertains

Food and festivities were plentiful for the 91 people who attended NDOR's 3rd Annual Winter Party on Friday, February 7. The event was held after working hours at the Sesostris Shrine Center Great Hall and paid for by those in attendance.

Lincoln-area NDOR employees and their guests enjoyed socializing, dinner and dancing. The band, "Hell Toupèe", played a variety of rock 'n roll. Jeff Dell, who is a NDOR employee, was the awesome drummer! A delicious dinner was catered by Tastefully Yours and table decorations were provided by Rhonda and Dean DeButts.

Pat Brunken and Linda "Zip" Masek, organizers of the event, had additional help selling tickets from Lori Larson, Vicki Simon, Kay Benson, and Joey Kramer. Sue Gott designed and produced the tickets.



Photos by Linda Masek

All in the Family

Information for "All in the Family" should be sent to the Communication Division. Appropriate information will be included in future Roadrunners.

Please note: Birth announcements will be published as long as written permission is received by the Communication Division. This is necessary, as NDOR is required to adhere to privacy laws under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Births

Congratulations to Dallas and Jessica Pears on the birth of their son, Landon Michael, born November 24. Dallas is a Hwy. Maintenance Worker, Sr. in Materials & Research.

Congratulations to Steve Meyer on the birth of his grandson, Mason Matthew, born January 17. Steve is Hwy. Project Manager at District 4 in Hastings.

Congratulations to Jim and Susan Wilkinson on the birth of their first grandchildren, twins Oliver Salvatore and Claire Leigh Victoria, born December 14. Jim is an Engineer III in Planning & Project Development.

Rob and Kim Christian are grandparents of Vivian Grace, born December 5. Rob is an IT Applications Developer Senior in Materials & Research.

John and Linda Schulte are the proud grandparents of a new granddaughter, Evelyn Mae, born on December 12. John is a Senior Auditor in Controller and Linda is a past Roadway Design employee.

Congratulations to John and Joan Riel on the birth of their granddaughter, Amelia Wren, born January 1. She was the New Year baby for Buffalo County. John is Hwy. Maintenance Crew Chief at District 4 in Geneva.

Condolences

Condolences to Randy and Donna Sabata and family on the death of Randy's mother on December 24 and his father on January 23. Randy is the Hwy. Maintenance Superintendent at District 4 in Hastings.

Condolences to Mark and Kendall Tonjes on the death of Mark's father. Kendall is Hwy. Project Scheduling/Program Manager in Program Management. Mark worked at Roads from 1976-1998 as Facilities Maintenance Manager and is currently Capitol Manager in The Office of the Capitol Commission.

Condolences to Debbie Nelson on the passing of her brother. Deb is a Hwy. Cartographer Senior in Materials & Research.

Condolences to Rick Irwin and his family on the death of his father. Rick is a Construction Tech III at District 8 in Ainsworth.

Weddings

Congratulations on the February 14th marriage of Stevie Swedberg and Judd Reed. Stevie is the daughter of Karen and Steve Swedberg. Karen is the District 6 Administrative Assistant in North Platte.

This 'n That

Congratulations to Jim Beason on his retirement after 47 years of service. Jim was Hwy. Quality Assurance Manager of the Aggregate Lab in Materials & Research.

Congratulations to Rich Morrell on his retirement after 44 years of service. Rich was Hwy. Project Manager at District 6 in North Platte.

Congratulations to Lyle Stabenow on his retirement after 41 years of service. Lyle was Hwy. Maintenance Superintendent at District 7 in Holdrege.

Andrew Kessler graduated from Army National Guard Basic Training at Jackson, SC, on February 6. Andrew will continue his schooling in Virginia for 12 weeks. Andrew is the son of Stephanie and Roger Kessler. Stephanie is an Office Clerk III in Traffic Engineering-Hwy Safety-Accident Records.

Sonny Adkins, daughter of Kathy Adkins, graduated from Creighton University Nursing Program in January. She will begin her career as a BSN, RN at Alegent Creighton Health Hospital in Omaha. Kathy is a Staff Assistant in Operations.

Twins Retire...

Congratulations to Joyce Weeks and Jean Uarich, who retired on January 31 from Traffic Engineering-Highway Safety-Accident Records. Joyce worked as an Office Clerk III for 16½ years in Accident Records and four years at the Dept. of Aging—with 20½ years total state service. She plans to publish a book of her poetry, spend time with family, and travel with her husband, Cal. Jean worked as an Office Clerk III in Accident Records for 13½ years. Jean and her husband, Ron, plan to remodel their home. Later, moving to Missouri, where Ron can hunt and fish, and Jean can be closer to her family.

Service Awards

Congratulations to these dedicated individuals for their work and continued service with the Department of Roads. They celebrate their service dates in *February and March 2014*.

60 Years

Ernest Voss, Roadway Design

40 Years

Joy Mullendore, Operations

Rodger Preble, District 1

Jesse Reyes, District 5

30 Years

Dale Coufal, District 4

James Karlin, District 2

Mark Klingelhofer, District 4

Lorraine Legg, Roadway Design

Michael Pummel, District 1

20 Years

Kevin Blake, District 8

Kirk Culler, District 4

James Ebeling, District 1

Allen Peters, District 5

10 Years

Terrence Buchholz, Right-of-Way

Marvin Dethloff, District 2

Jason Freidrichs, M&R

Harvey Humphrey, District 1

Jenifer Lautenschlager-Dohmen, HR

Michael Mattison, Operations

Benjamin Merchant, District 4

Daniel Ore, District 1

Robert Ramsey, District 4

Brittney Sladky, Right-of-Way

Ronald Smith, District 1

Ronald Spilker, District 1

David Teten, District 1

Steve Ziemba, District 3

Daniel Zwiebel, District 8



NDOR Events Calendar

— February —

- 6 Letting**
1:30 p.m., NDOR Auditorium
Contact Kendall Stege @ 402-479-4528
- 12 RoadToasters**
12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m., Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.
Contact Glenn Williams @ 402-479-3628
- 16 - 22 National Engineers Week**
- 17 State Holiday – Presidents' Day**
- 21 Bd. Public Roads Class. & Stds.**
9:00 a.m., NDOR Auditorium
Contact LeMoyne Schulz @ 402-479-4436
- 21 Bd. Examiners for Co. Hwy. & City Street Supts.**
10:00 a.m. Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.
Contact LeMoyne Schulz @ 402-479-4436
- 26 RoadToasters**
12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m., Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.
Contact Glenn Williams @ 402-479-3628

— March —

- 4-6 Project Managers' Conference**
Younes Conference Center, Kearney
- 11 New Employee Orientation Program**
NDOR Auditorium
Contact Denice Sears @ 402-479-3656
- 12 RoadToasters**
12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m., Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.
Contact Glenn Williams @ 402-479-3628
- 13 Letting**
1:30 p.m., NDOR Auditorium
Contact Kendall Stege @ 402-479-4528
- 21 Bd. Public Roads Class & Stds.**
9:00 a.m., NDOR Auditorium
Contact LeMoyne Schulz @ 402-479-4436
- 26 RoadToasters**
12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m., Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.
Contact Glenn Williams @ 402-479-3628

- 28 Hwy. Commission Meeting/
District 3 Program Hearing**
8:30 a.m., Marina Inn,
385 E. 4th St., South Sioux City, NE
Contact Greg Weinert @ 402-479-4871

- 3/31 – 4/4 National Work Zone Awareness Week**
www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/wz/outreach/wz_awareness.htm

— April —

- National Distracted Driving Awareness Month**
- 1-30 Great Nebraska Trash-Off**
www.transportation.nebraska.gov/operations/maintenance/adopt.htm#trash
- 4 Bd. Examiners for Co. Hwy. & City Street Supts.**
Meeting 8:45 a.m. Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.
Examination 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. NDOR Auditorium
Contact LeMoyne Schulz @ 402-479-4436
- 9 RoadToasters 45th Anniversary Celebration**
12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m., NDOR Auditorium
Contact Glenn Williams @ 402-479-3628
- 15 Blood Drive – Community Blood Bank**
NDOR Central Headquarters
Contact Diane Holthus @ 402-479-4580
- 17 Letting**
1:30 p.m., NDOR Auditorium
Contact Kendall Stege @ 402-479-4528
- 18 Bd. Public Roads Class. & Stds.**
9:00 a.m., NDOR Auditorium
Contact LeMoyne Schulz @ 402-479-4436
- 22 Earth Day**
www.earthday.org
- 23 RoadToasters**
12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m., Hwy. Commission Meeting Rm.
Contact Glenn Williams @ 402-479-3628
- 25 State Holiday – Arbor Day**
- 4/29 - 5/1 Operations & Maintenance Conference**
Holiday Inn Hotel & Convention Center, Kearney

If you would like a key event included on upcoming calendars, call the Communication Office 479-4512 or e-mail linda.wilson@nebraska.gov. Information for the April/May Roadrunner should be received by March 28, 2014.



Toward Zero Deaths